

**SUMMARY OF THE  
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING  
OCTOBER 29, 2002**

The Proficiency Testing (PT) Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met on Tuesday, October 29, 2002, at 1 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). Chairperson Ms. RaeAnn Haynes of the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality led the meeting. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to prepare for the upcoming Eighth NELAC Interim Meeting (NELAC 8i).*

**INTRODUCTION**

Ms. Haynes called the meeting to order with a review of the committee's October 15, 2002, teleconference minutes. The minutes were approved, pending the addition of two committee members who had been omitted from the NELAC Directory. Ms. Haynes informed the committee that she had forwarded a revised radiochemistry PT acceptance criteria file to be posted on the NELAC website because the existing file was corrupt. The committee then turned its attention to the committee agenda for NELAC 8i in Santa Fe, NM.

**DISCUSSION OF TOPICS ON PT AGENDA FOR NELAC 8i**

The committee decided to meet as a group in Santa Fe before their session at NELAC 8i to reach consensus for a consistent presentation of their agenda discussion topics.

Move to method-based PT system - It was noted that the 2001 NELAC Standards will become effective in July 2003 and that PT will move at that time from a matrix-analyte system to a program-analyte system. There was moderate discussion of implementation. Ms. Haynes indicated that the accrediting authorities must determine their expectations in regard to how quickly laboratories must transition to a method-based PT system. It was suggested that the PT Committee must decide what to suggest to the accrediting authorities in regard to implementation.

Proposed changes to the NELAC Standards - Discussion of proposed changes to the standards was deferred until the committee's next teleconference, to be held on November 12, 2002.

PT provider monitoring criteria - Dr. Ralph Obenauf identified two outstanding issues that NELAC and the Institute for National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation (INELA) must address: 1) the need for stronger oversight, and 2) the national database. There was some discussion of suggestions that the PT Committee should be responsible for oversight. It was noted that the PT committee is a standards-setting committee composed of volunteers. In contrast, the oversight body must have the time and resources to review copious amounts of data and the authority for enforcement. It was also noted that no one has expressed a willingness to support the database. There was moderate discussion of government funding for the PT oversight body (PTOB). Noting that the current emphasis is on homeland security, it was suggested that the PT Committee draft a proposal and cost estimate for the PTOB in language

appropriate to homeland security. Ms. Haynes noted that the two issues would not be addressed by the PT Committee at NELAC 8i. Questions will be deferred to NELAC/INELA.

Radiochemistry - Noting that Dr. John Griggs would not be able to attend NELAC 8i, Ms. Haynes indicated that she would mention the radiochemistry PT acceptance criteria on his behalf. They have been posted on the NELAC website. Dr. Griggs' workgroup is working on acceptance criteria for other matrices. They will present these criteria at future meetings.

Electronic reporting format - Dr. Anand Mudambi indicated that he would give a report at NELAC 8i on ease of use for the electronic reporting format.

Whole Effluent Toxicity (WET) - Mr. James Pletl indicated that he would not be able to address the WET issue until mid-to-late November. Noting that Mr. Pletl would not be able to attend NELAC 8i, Ms. Haynes offered to introduce the subcommittee and its charge. Dr. Thomas McAninch indicated that he would provide basic information on the WET subcommittee.

### **COMMENTS/QUESTIONS RECEIVED**

Ms. Hynes indicated that she had received questions from the states of Utah and New Hampshire. The state of Utah asked for clarification regarding the 18-month initial accreditation PT requirement, the requirement for frequency of PT participation, and the requirement that laboratories pass two of their last three PT studies. It was noted that the mention of 18 months has no application to continuing accreditation. Members of the committee suggested that this portion of the standards is unclear and should be clarified. They suggested covering the issue in the PT Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) until the standards can be clarified. Noting that she must respond to the state of Utah by October 31, Ms. Haynes indicated that she would draft her response to be used as a base for the FAQ.

Ms. Haynes indicated that the question from the state of New Hampshire concerned why the range is so high for the water pollution (WP) PT studies. The answer to this question is straightforward. The WP studies are used for discharges in which there is potential for high analyte concentrations and for hazardous waste.

### **INELA UPDATE**

Dr. Thomas McAninch informed the committee that INELA plans to send a membership packet to everyone on their mailing list.

### **EPA/NIST ITEMS**

Ms. Haynes informed the committee that she had received an email from EPA's drinking water program office in Cincinnati asking for the PT reporting limit (PTRL) ranges for haloacetic acids in drinking water. It was noted that Mr. Chuck Wibby has this information. Ms. Haynes indicated that she would email Mr. Wibby to get the PTRL ranges.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Dr. Michael Miller noted that the observation report to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) from the accrediting authorities PTOB/PTPA committee had not received a response. He indicated that he would forward the report to the PT Committee for their review. Ms. Haynes indicated that she would contact Ms. Reenie Parris at NIST to inquire about the status of the report.

## **CONCLUSION**

Ms. Haynes indicated that she would distribute a summary of the committee's planned NELAC 8i discussion items for committee review and discussion at the next teleconference. The committee agreed that they would reach consensus before their presentation at NELAC 8i. There being no more new business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned shortly after 2:00 p.m. EST. The committee's next meeting will be on Tuesday, November 12, 2002, at 1:00 p.m. EST via teleconference.

**ACTION ITEMS  
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING  
OCTOBER 29, 2002**

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date to be Completed</b>
1.	Ms. Haynes will respond to questions received from the states of Utah and New Hampshire.	October 31, 2002
2.	Ms. Haynes will contact Mr. Wibby in regard to PTRL ranges for haloacetic acids in drinking water.	November 12, 2002
3.	Dr. Miller will forward the AA PTOB/PTPA Committee observation report to the PT Committee for review.	November 12, 2002
4.	Ms. Haynes will contact Ms. Parris regarding the status of the AA PTOB/PTPA Committee observation report.	November 12, 2002
5.	Ms. Haynes will distribute a summary of the committee's planned NELAC 8i discussion items for committee review and discussion.	November 12, 2002

**PARTICIPANTS  
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING  
OCTOBER 29, 2002**

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